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Letter dated 2 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey to you information on the measures taken by the Government of Uzbekistan on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see annex).

I would appreciate your having the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Bakhtiyor **Ibragimov**

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Annex to the letter dated 2 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Practical measures taken by the Government of Uzbekistan to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan is continuing to extend its far-reaching social reforms, which are designed to further improve the well-being of its people and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Uzbekistan entered a new phase in its development in 2017. A special focus has been placed on addressing the challenges highlighted in the national development strategy for 2017–2021 by mobilizing every strength and resource available to the Government and society.

A vital part of that process has been the implementation of the measures outlined in the Government's declaration of 2017 as the year for dialogue with the people and promotion of human interests. As the President of Uzbekistan, Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, made clear in his address to both houses of parliament in December 2017, government agencies must make the principle that they serve the people a cornerstone of their work, rather than the other way around.

As part of the effort to put this principle into practice, a new system is being used to engage in open dialogue with the public and to address their grievances effectively. Public reception offices and a virtual reception office of the President of Uzbekistan form the foundation of this system and function as a unique democratic institution that handles petitions from citizens. The main objective of these changes is to promote the interests of the people.

Initial measures have been taken to implement effective economic reforms in response to current needs. Laws, decrees and regulations have been adopted and are being brought steadily into force, as are comprehensive well-designed programmes that take a new approach to organizing the national economy with a view to its further liberalization, improving its legal framework and modernizing and diversifying production. Within a short period of time, 161 major industrial facilities have been commissioned in Uzbekistan.

The measures taken in 2017 ensured sustainable economic growth at a rate of 5.5 per cent and export growth of 15 per cent. The trade surplus reached $854 million.

The national currency — the Uzbek sum — can now be freely exchanged. Since the liberalization of the currency market, the number of transactions to buy or sell foreign currency has grown by 1.5 times. At the same time, the Government's gold and currency reserves have grown by $1.1 billion.

In the past year, 12 free economic zones and 45 industrial zones began operating in Uzbekistan, fuelling growth in the nation's regions. Work is under way to establish 50 additional industrial zones in the near future.

Job creation, which is considered to be of crucial importance for Uzbekistan, is a top priority. In 2017, 336,000 new jobs were created from the establishment of new industrial enterprises, the development of small business and private enterprise, and the expansion of the services sector.

Social reform — another key national policy component — is being carried out with the implementation of approved programmes. The Government is building

affordable housing using updated designs and is offering subsidized mortgages. More than 3.5 million square metres of living space have been added with the construction of standardized multistorey housing in cities large and small. The volume of new residential construction has eclipsed that of previous years, reaching a level 20 times that of 2007, 3.5 times that of 2010, when the standardized housing construction programme began, and twice that of 2014.

Measures have been taken to mitigate the environmental situation in the Aral Sea region. The Ministry of Finance has established a fund for the development of the Aral Sea region, setting aside more than 200 billion sum or approximately $25 million. The funds have been used to improve water supply and the living conditions of the people living in the Republic of Karakalpakstan and the Province of Khorezm.

A special effort was made in 2017 to build new and repair existing educational institutions. Twelve new general education schools were built, 320 were refurbished and 152 underwent capital repairs. In addition, 107 preschools were built or refurbished and 195 underwent capital repairs.

There are plans to build thousands of new kindergartens throughout the country in the coming three to four years and to step up the quality of the education and care they offer. In addition, in view of the importance and impact of early childhood education, Uzbekistan has established the Ministry of Early Education.

Special schools that focus on the exact sciences and use innovative and creative teaching methods have been established. There has also been a push to improve the system of higher education. In particular, a comprehensive programme for developing the system of higher education in 2017–2021 has been adopted.

With the reorganization of institutes and branch campuses, there are now a total of 81 institutions of higher education, 15 regional branch campuses and 7 international branch campuses.

Systemic and infrastructure improvements have been made to the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences and a number of its research institutes and centres have resumed their work. Elections to the Academy of Sciences were conducted for the first time in years. All these efforts have but one goal: to ensure that Uzbekistan can hold its own against global competition as regards scientific achievement, intellectual potential, a modern workforce and advanced technologies.

As part of an effort to achieve deeper reforms and the Sustainable Development Goals, 2018 has been declared the year for entrepreneurship, innovation and technology in Uzbekistan.

As a matter of priority, entrepreneurs will be provided with the fullest support, specifically by making it easier to import high technologies and the latest scientific breakthroughs and to integrate them into production processes. In addition, special measures are planned to create a broad range of opportunities for upgrading skills, training at leading international companies and organizations and engaging in mutually beneficial cooperation with them.

Uzbekistan is embarking on the path of innovative development that seeks to fundamentally improve every aspect of the nation's Government and society. To that end, the Ministry of Innovative Development was established in 2017 to address specific challenges. The Ministry will be the driving force behind the execution of key projects having to do with the national economy and with the life of Uzbek society more generally. Specifically, it will focus on developing scientific research activity and innovation by mobilizing the funding required, providing every kind of support

for the participation of talented young people in this process, and promoting creative ideas and proposals.

Uzbekistan has initiated a large-scale economic liberalization process. There are numerous challenges associated with strengthening the national economy before Uzbekistan can join the ranks of developed nations. There is a growing number of countries in the world today that are developing rapidly through the adoption of innovative development models and the export of cutting-edge ideas, know-how and smart technologies.

The Government is working hard to remove existing barriers to investment in the real economy and to encourage the implementation of completely new approaches to project development. To this end, as a first step, national development programmes have been adopted and a fund has been established to finance them.

Today, more than 51 per cent of the nation's population lives in rural areas. However, the share of agricultural production in the country's gross domestic product remains under 17 per cent, of which less than 10 per cent is processed. It has been proposed, therefore, that a comprehensive agricultural reform programme that focuses on ensuring food security is needed.

Concerted action has also been taken to protect human health. With a view to steadily improving health services, the use of smart medicine and centralized health records will be adapted to local needs and adopted, giving patients in the regions easy access to timely high-quality care and making early detection and remote prevention of diseases possible.

On the whole, the consistent implementation of reforms in Uzbekistan should assist in the achievement of the Goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, improve public welfare and address pressing social and economic challenges facing the country.